

Most of the non-elected claims have been cancelled. Applicant submits that claims 6, 7, 22 and 23 should be rejoined and allowed upon allowance of the claims from which they depend.

An Information Disclosure Statement and Form PTO-1449 are being filed herewith. The Examiner is requested to consider the information, and then initial and return to the undersigned a copy of the Form PTO-1449.

Applicant appreciates the Examiner's indication that claims 4 and 5 contain allowable subject matter. For the reasons discussed below, Applicant respectfully submits that all pending claims are allowable.

Fig. 8 is objected to for failing to include a legend reciting "Prior Art". Applicant filed concurrently herewith a Letter to the Official Draftsperson forwarding a new Fig. 8 which includes a legend reciting "Prior Art". It is respectfully requested that the objection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-5 and 15-21 are objected to for failing to have antecedent basis for "the same plane". Applicant amended claims 1 and 16 responsive to the objection. It is respectfully requested that the objection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-3 and 15-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Taniguchi et al. (hereinafter "Taniguchi"), U.S. Patent No. 4,666,291 and claims 18-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Taniguchi. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

Page 3 of the Office Action states that Fig. 1 of Taniguchi discloses an exposure apparatus comprising a base member (12) and a plurality of projecting support elements (15) which are arranged like triangular meshes and the distal top end portions thereof are placed substantially on a plane. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Taniguchi discloses a light exposure apparatus that has a thin plate deforming mechanism (5) which comprises a chuck platen (12) for holding a wafer (6) on its top surface

(12A), the bottom surface of the chuck platen (12B) being formed with imperforate slits (15) patterned in the form of a grid composed of a plurality of triangular meshes (17) so that the chuck platen may be deformed along bending lines along the triangular meshes (see, e.g., the Abstract).

First, as shown in Figure 3, the imperforate slits (15) are located on the bottom surface (12B) of the chuck platen (12) and the slits do not extend to the top surface (12A) of the chuck platen (12). Thus, the slits do not form support elements on which the substrate (or second object) is placed as defined in claims 1 and 16. The slits do not support anything, therefore they are not support members. Second, the imperforate slits (15) are slits, i.e., gaps/channels in the chuck platen and not a plurality of projecting support members as recited in claims 1 and 16.

For at least these reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that Taniguchi fails to disclose a substrate holding apparatus which holds a flat-like substrate, comprising a base member and a plurality of projecting support members disposed on said base member such that the projecting support members are arranged like a triangular lattice and distal end portions thereof are substantially positioned on a plane, wherein the substrate (or second object) is to be placed on said plurality of support members, as recited in claims 1 and 16. For at least the reasons discussed above with regard to claims 1 and 16, Applicant submits that Taniguchi fails to disclose all the features of the claims, which depend from claims 1 and 16, respectively. It is respectfully requested that the rejections be withdrawn.

Claims 1-3 and 15-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Mori et al. (hereinafter "Mori"), U.S. Patent No. 5,191,218, in view of Taniguchi. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Page 5 of the Office Action states that Mori discloses a vacuum attraction holding device comprising a base member (1) , a plurality of projecting support member (3) and a

suction mechanism (6, 7). Further, the Office Action states that Mori does not expressly teach the plurality of projecting support members (3) being arranged like a triangular lattice and distal end portions thereof are substantially positioned on a plane, wherein the substrate is to be placed on said plurality of support members as recited in claims 1 and 16. However, the Office Action states that Taniguchi discloses a plurality of projecting support member (15) patterned in the form of a grid of triangular meshes and thus, the combination of Mori and Taniguchi renders obvious the subject matter of claims 1-3 and 15-21. Applicant respectfully disagrees.


Mori discloses a wafer holding device including a holding base (401) for holding a wafer through vacuum attraction applied to the bottom face of the wafer, the holding base having an attracting surface (402), two concentric ring-like grooves (409) formed in the attracting surface and suction ports (403) which communicate with a suction passage (408) (col. 3, line 57 - col. 4, line 26). Further, as shown in Figure 5A, the suction ports (403) are concentric circles of space/air and which provide a suction path and the suction port (403) are not projecting support members. Instead, the attracting surface (402) supports the wafer.

In addition, as discussed above, Taniguchi also fails to disclose a substrate holding apparatus which holds a flat-like substrate, comprising a base member and a plurality of projecting support members disposed on said base member such that the projecting support members are arranged like a triangular lattice and distal end portions thereof are substantially positioned on a plane, wherein the substrate (or second object) is to be placed on said plurality of support members, as recited in claims 1 and 16. For at least these reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the combination of Mori and Taniguchi fails to disclose or suggest all the features of claims 1 and 16, as well as all the features of the claims, which depend from claims 1 and 16, respectively. It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments:

Appendix  
Petition for Extension of Time  
Letter to the Official Draftsperson  
Information Disclosure Statement

Date: February 6, 2003

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<p>DEPOSIT ACCOUNT USE AUTHORIZATION Please grant any extension necessary for entry; Charge any fee due to our Deposit Account No. 15-0461</p>
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APPENDIX

Changes to Claims:

Claims 8-14 and 24-27 are cancelled.

Claims 28-38 are added.

The following is a marked-up version of the amended claims:

1. (Amended) A substrate holding apparatus which holds a flat-like substrate, comprising:
  - a base member; and
  - a plurality of projecting support members disposed on said base member such that the ~~supporting members~~ projecting support members are arranged like a triangular lattice and distal end portions thereof are substantially positioned on ~~substantially the same~~ a plane, wherein

the substrate is to be placed on said plurality of support members.
16. (Amended) An exposure apparatus which illuminates a first object with an exposure beam, and exposes a second object with the exposure beam via the first object, comprising:
  - a holder having a plurality of projecting support members disposed like a triangular lattice such that distal end portions thereof which are to contact the second object are positioned ~~on~~ substantially the same on a plane, and
  - a stage system including a movable body in which said holder is provided.